

Seymour Hersh

Seymour Myron "Sy" Hersh (born April 8, 1937) is an American investigative journalist and political writer based in Washington, D.C. He is a longtime contributor to *The New Yorker* magazine on national security matters and has also written for the *London Review of Books* since 2013.^{[5][6]}

Hersh first gained recognition in 1969 for exposing the My Lai Massacre and its cover-up during the Vietnam War, for which he received the 1970 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting. In 2004, he notably reported on the US military's mistreatment of detainees at Abu Ghraib prison. He has also won two National Magazine Awards and five George Polk Awards. In 2004, he received the George Orwell Award.^[7]

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Seymour Hersh



Hersh in 2004

Born	Seymour Myron Hersh <div>April 8, 1937</div> <div>Chicago, Illinois, United States</div>
Other names	Sy
Alma mater	University of Chicago
Occupation	Journalist, writer
Spouse(s)	Elizabeth Sarah Klein (m. 1958)
Awards	Polk Award (1969, 1973, 1974, 1981, 2004) ^{[1][2]} <div>Pulitzer Prize</div>

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Early years

Hersh was born on April 8, 1937^[8] in Chicago to Yiddish-speaking Lithuanian Jewish parents who emigrated to the US from Lithuania and Poland and ran a dry-cleaning shop in Chicago's Austin neighborhood. After graduating from the University of Chicago with a history degree, Hersh found himself struggling to find a job. He began working at Walgreens before being accepted into University of Chicago Law School but was soon expelled for poor grades.^[9] After returning for a short time to Walgreens, Hersh began his career in journalism as a police reporter for the City News Bureau in 1959. He later became a correspondent for United Press International in South Dakota. In 1963, he went on to become a Chicago and Washington correspondent for the Associated Press. While working in Washington Hersh first met and befriended I. F. Stone, whose *I. F. Stone's Weekly* would serve as an initial inspiration for Hersh's later work. It was during this time that Hersh began to form his investigative style, often walking out of regimented press briefings at the Pentagon and seeking out one-on-one interviews with high-ranking officers. After a falling out with the editors at the AP when they insisted on watering down a story about the US government's work on biological and chemical weapons, Hersh left the AP and sold his story to *The New Republic*. During the 1968 presidential election, he served as press secretary for the campaign of Senator Eugene McCarthy.

After leaving the McCarthy campaign, Hersh returned to journalism as a freelancer covering the Vietnam War. In 1969, Hersh received a tip from Geoffrey Cowan of *The Village Voice* regarding an Army lieutenant being court-martialled for killing civilians in Vietnam. His subsequent investigation, sold to the Dispatch News Service, was run in thirty-three newspapers and exposed the My Lai massacre, winning him the Pulitzer Prize in 1970.^{[9][10]}

In 1972, Hersh was hired as a reporter for the Washington bureau of *The New York Times*, where he served from 1972 to 1975 and again in 1979. Hersh reported on the Watergate scandal, though most of the credit for that story went to Carl Bernstein and Hersh's longtime rival Bob Woodward. Nonetheless, Hersh's Watergate investigations led him in 1983 to the publication of *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House*, a damning portrait of Henry Kissinger that won the National Book Critics Circle Award.

In 1975, Hersh was active in the investigation and reporting of Project Azorian (which he called Project Jennifer), the CIA's clandestine effort to raise a Soviet submarine using the Howard Hughes' *Glomar Explorer*. This was one of the most complex, expensive, and secretive intelligence operations of the Cold War at a cost of about \$800 million (\$3.8 billion in 2015) dollars.

After *The New York Times*

His 1983 book *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* won him the [National Book Critics Circle Award](#) and the *Los Angeles Times* book prize in biography. In 1985, Hersh contributed to the [PBS](#) television documentary *Buying the Bomb*. In 1993 Hersh became a regular contributor to *The New Yorker*.^[11]

Hersh has appeared regularly on the [syndicated](#) television news program *Democracy Now!*^[12]

Selected stories

My Lai Massacre

On November 12, 1969, Hersh reported the story of the [My Lai Massacre](#), in which hundreds of unarmed Vietnamese civilians were murdered by [US soldiers](#) in March 1968.^[13] The report prompted widespread condemnation around the world and reduced public support for the [Vietnam War](#) in the United States. The explosive news of the massacre fueled the outrage of the [US peace movement](#), which demanded the withdrawal of US troops from [Vietnam](#). Hersh wrote about the massacre and its cover-up in *My Lai 4: A Report on the Massacre and Its Aftermath* (1970) and *Cover-up: The Army's Secret Investigation of the Massacre at My Lai 4* (1972). For *My Lai 4*, Hersh traveled across the United States and interviewed nearly 50 members of the Charlie Company.^[14] A movie called "Interviews with My Lai Veterans" won an Oscar for Best Documentary, Short Subjects in 1971. A movie was also produced, based on this book, by Italian director [Paolo Bertola](#) in 2009.^[15]

Project Jennifer

In early 1974, Hersh had planned to publish a story on "Project Jennifer" (later revealed to be named [Project Azorian](#) and [Operation Matador](#)), a covert CIA project to recover a sunken [Soviet navy](#) submarine from the floor of the [Pacific Ocean](#). CIA director [William Colby](#) discussed the operation with Hersh in 1974, but obtained his promise not to publish while the operation was active. [Bill Kovach](#), *The New York Times* Washington, D.C. bureau chief at the time, said in 2005 that the government offered a convincing argument to delay publication in early 1974—exposure at that time, while the project was ongoing, "would have caused an international incident". The *NYT* eventually published Hersh's account on March 19, 1975, after a story appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, and included a five-paragraph explanation of the many twists and turns in the path to publication. It is unclear what, if any, action was taken by the [Soviet Union](#) after learning of the story. It was later revealed that the leaks prevented a second recovery attempt of the submarine after a small portion of it was raised in the summer of 1974.^[16]

Korean Air Flight 007

In *The Target Is Destroyed* (1986), Hersh alleged that the shooting down of [Korean Air Flight 007](#) in September 1983 by the Soviet Union was due to a combination of Soviet incompetence and United States intelligence operations intended to confuse Soviet responses.

Later releases of government information confirmed that there was a PSYOPS campaign against the Soviet Union that had been in place from the first few months of the Reagan administration. This campaign included the largest US Pacific Fleet exercise ever held, in April to May 1983.

Mordechai Vanunu and Robert Maxwell

In *The Samson Option: Israel's Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy* (1991), Hersh wrote that Nicholas Davies, the foreign editor of the *Daily Mirror*, had tipped off the Israeli embassy in London about Mordechai Vanunu. Vanunu had given information about Israel's nuclear weapons program first to *The Sunday Times* and later to the *Sunday Mirror*. At the time, the *Sunday Mirror* and its sibling newspaper, the *Daily Mirror* were owned by media magnate Robert Maxwell who was alleged to have had contacts with Israel's intelligence services. According to Hersh, Davies had also worked for the Mossad. Vanunu was later lured by Mossad from London to Rome, kidnapped, returned to Israel, and sentenced to 18 years in jail. Davies and Maxwell published an anti-Vanunu story that was claimed by critics to be part of a disinformation campaign on behalf of the Israeli government.^[17]

Hersh repeated the allegations during a press conference held in London to publicize his book. No British newspaper would publish the allegations because of Maxwell's famed litigiousness. However, two British MPs raised the matter in the House of Commons, which meant that British newspapers were able to report what had been said without fear of being sued for libel. Maxwell called the claims "ludicrous, a total invention". He fired Davies shortly thereafter.^[18]

Attack on pharmaceutical factory in Sudan

Hersh strongly criticized Bill Clinton's decision to destroy, on August 20, 1998, the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Sudan. Al-Shifa, the largest pharmaceutical factory in Sudan, accounted for half the country's domestically produced medicines.^[19]

Iraq

Hersh has written a series of articles for *The New Yorker* magazine detailing military and security matters surrounding the US-led invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq. In March 2002, he described the planning process for a new invasion of Iraq that he alleged had been on-going since the end of the First Gulf War, under the leadership of Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz, Fried and other neo-conservatives. In a 2004 article, he alleged that Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld circumvented the normal intelligence analysis function of the CIA in their quest to make the case for the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Another article, "Lunch with the Chairman", led Richard Perle, a subject of the article, to call Hersh the "closest thing American journalism has to a terrorist."^[20]

A March 7, 2007, article entitled, "The Redirection" described a recent shift in the George W. Bush administration's Iraq policy, the goal of which Hersh said was to "contain" Iran. Hersh asserted that "a by-product of these activities has been the bolstering of Sunni extremist groups that espouse a militant vision of Islam and are hostile to America and sympathetic to Al Qaeda."^[21]

In May 2004, Hersh published a series of articles which described the treatment of detainees by US military police at Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, Iraq.^[22] The articles included allegations that private military contractors contributed to prisoner mistreatment and that intelligence agencies such as the CIA ordered torture in order to break prisoners for interrogations. They also alleged that torture was a usual practice in other US-run prisons as well, e.g., in Bagram Theater Internment Facility and Guantanamo. In subsequent articles, Hersh wrote that the abuses were part of a secret interrogation program, known as "Copper Green". According to Hersh's sources, the program was expanded to Iraq with the direct approval of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, both in an attempt to deal with the growing insurgency there and as part of "Rumsfeld's long-standing desire to wrest control of America's clandestine and paramilitary operations from the C.I.A."^[23] Much of his material for these articles was based on the Army's own internal investigations.^[24]

Scott Ritter, a disaffected former arms inspector, asserted in his October 19, 2005 interview with Seymour Hersh that the US policy to remove Iraqi president Saddam Hussein from power started with US president George H. W. Bush in August 1990. Ritter concluded from public remarks by President Bush and Secretary of State James Baker that the Iraq sanctions would only be lifted when Hussein was removed from power. The justification for sanctions was disarmament. The CIA offered the opinion that containing Hussein for six months would result in the collapse of his regime. According to Hersh, this policy resulted in the invasion and occupation of Iraq.^[25]

Iran

In January 2005, Hersh alleged that the US was conducting covert operations in Iran to identify targets for possible strikes. Hersh also wrote that Pakistan and the United States had struck a "Khan-for-Iran" deal in which Washington would look the other way at Pakistan's nuclear transgressions and not demand handing over of its infamous nuclear scientist A. Q. Khan, in return for Islamabad's cooperation in neutralizing Iran's nuclear plans. This was also denied by officials of the governments of the US and Pakistan.

In the April 17, 2006 issue of *The New Yorker*,^[26] Hersh wrote that the Bush administration had plans for an air strike on Iran. Of particular note in his article was that a US nuclear first strike (possibly using the B61-11 bunker-buster nuclear weapon) is under consideration to eliminate underground Iranian uranium enrichment facilities. In response, President Bush cited Hersh's reportage as "wild speculation."^[27]

When, in October 2007, he was asked about presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's hawkish views on Iran, Hersh stated that Jewish donations were the main reason for these:

“ *Money. A lot of the Jewish money from New York. Come on, let's not kid about it. A significant percentage of Jewish money, and many leading American Jews support the Israeli position that Iran is an existential threat. And I think it's as simple as that. When you're from New York and from New York City, you take the view of – right now, when you're running a campaign, you follow that line. And there's no other explanation for it, because she's smart enough to know the downside.* ”^[28]

During one journalism conference, Hersh stated that after the Strait of Hormuz incident, members of the Bush administration met in vice president Dick Cheney's office to consider methods of initiating a war with Iran. One idea considered was staging a false flag operation involving the use of Navy SEALs dressed as Iranian PT boaters who would engage in a firefight with US ships. According to Hersh this proposed provocation was rejected. Hersh's allegation has not been verified.^[29]

Lebanon

In August 2006, in an article in *The New Yorker*, Hersh wrote that the White House gave the green light for the Israeli government to execute an attack on Hezbollah in Lebanon. Supposedly, communication between the Israeli government and the US government about this came as early as two months in advance of the capture of two Israeli soldiers and the killing of eight others by Hezbollah prior to the 2006 Lebanon War in July 2006.^[30] The US government denied these allegations.^[31]

Killing of Osama bin Laden

In September 2013, during an interview with *The Guardian*, Hersh commented that the 2011 raid that resulted in the death of Osama bin Laden was "one big lie, not one word of it is true". He said that the Obama administration lies systematically, and that American media outlets are reluctant to challenge the administration, saying "It's pathetic, they are more than obsequious, they are afraid to pick on this guy [Obama]".^[32] Hersh later clarified that he didn't dispute Bin Laden's death in Pakistan, and rather meant that the lying began in the aftermath of bin Laden's death.^[33]

On May 10, 2015, Hersh published the 10,000-word article "The Killing of Osama bin Laden" in the *London Review of Books* (*LRB*) on the fourth anniversary of the Abbottabad raid that killed bin Laden (Operation Neptune Spear). It immediately went viral, crashing the LRB website.^[34] Hersh outlined with extensive quoting of both named and unnamed sources the background to how bin Laden's presence in Abbotabad came to be known to the U.S. government and how the SEAL raid was in fact known to the Pakistanis and had ISI cooperation. Hersh alleges the U.S. government's narrative was in fact an elaborate cover story meant to conceal Pakistan's relationship with the Al Qaeda leader and to yield maximum political payoff for President Barack Obama in the runup to the 2012 election season:

The killing was the high point of Obama's first term, and a major factor in his re-election. The White House still maintains that the mission was an all-American affair, and that the senior generals of Pakistan's army and Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) were not told of the raid in advance. This is false, as are many other elements of the Obama administration's account.^[35]

The official U.S. version is that bin Laden's location at Abbottabad was identified by the CIA by tracking an al-Qaeda courier, Abu Ahmed al-Kuwaiti. Hersh reports that in August 2010 a former senior Pakistani intelligence officer walked into the office of Jonathan Bank, the CIA station chief at the US embassy in Islamabad and betrayed the secret of bin Laden's whereabouts in return for part of the \$25 million reward, and has since been relocated with his family to Washington and is a consultant to the CIA. The ISI had captured bin Laden in 2006; he had lived undetected from 2001 to 2006 with some of his wives and children in the Hindu Kush mountains. The ISI got to him by paying some of the local tribal people to betray him. Bin Laden was very ill and was living as prisoner under ISI control in the garrison town of Abbottabad less than two miles from Pakistan's National Military Academy at Kakul (equivalent of United States Military Academy at West Point). The Saudi government also knew about Osama's presence in Abbottabad and had advised the Pakistanis to keep him as a prisoner and gave financial assistance. Major Amir Aziz, a Pakistani Army doctor, was ordered to move near his compound to provide treatment. Aziz was also given a share of the \$25 million reward because he got the DNA sample which conclusively proved that it was bin Laden. A real casualty in the whole affair was the doctor named Shakil Afridi. His

perfectly legitimate hepatitis B vaccination programme was claimed to be the way the US obtained bin Laden's DNA. Afridi became the sacrificial lamb because the US wanted to protect its real CIA informant, Amir Aziz, who had been held by the Pakistanis. Afridi was sentenced to 33 years by the Pakistanis. Other vaccination programmes were canceled once this lie was put forth.^[35]

Hersh writes that the Pakistan Army and intelligence service was warned about the U.S. Navy SEALs' raid and made sure that the two helicopters carrying the SEALs to Abbottabad crossed Pakistani airspace without triggering an alarm: "The most blatant lie was that Pakistan's two most senior military leaders—General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, chief of the army staff, and General Ahmed Shuja Pasha, director general of the ISI—were never informed of the US mission."^[35] The report also states that Pakistani officials knew about the raid before it happened in May 2011 and instructed those monitoring bin Laden's compound to allow the SEALs to conduct the operation unobstructed.

Since his killing in 2011, the U.S. media has reported that bin Laden was given a perfunctory naval funeral off the deck of an aircraft carrier, to prevent any gravesite from becoming a symbol of martyrdom. According to Hersh's account of the assassination, bin Laden's corpse never made it to the USS Carl Vinson, because it had been torn apart by automatic fire at point-blank range before the CIA took whatever shreds were left: "Some members of the SEAL team had bragged to colleagues and others that they had torn bin Laden's body to pieces with rifle fire. The remains, including his head, which had only a few bullet holes in it, were thrown into a body bag and, during the helicopter flight back to Jalalabad, some body parts were tossed out over the Hindu Kush mountains." And bin Laden's wives and children were never turned over to the Americans for questioning.

Hersh's story drew harsh criticism from media commentators and officials. Peter Bergen disputed Hersh's contentions, saying they "defy common sense";^[36] Hersh responded that Bergen simply "views himself as the trustee of all things Bin Laden".^[37] A similar dismissal of Hersh's account came from former CIA Deputy Director Michael Morell.^[38] A former intelligence official who had direct knowledge of the operation speculated that the Pakistanis, who were furious that the operation took place without being detected by them, were behind the false story as a way to save face.^[39]

Others criticized the press response. In an article for the *Columbia Journalism Review*, Trevor Timm wrote that "barely any follow-up reporting has been done to corroborate or refute his [Hersh's] claims", and observed that Slate, for example, "ran five hit jobs on Hersh within 36 hours".^[40]

On May 12, the Pakistan-based journalist Amir Mir disclosed that the "walk-in" who had provided the CIA with the information about bin Laden's whereabouts was Brigadier Usman Khalid of ISI.^{[41][42]}

On May 20, 2015, a former CIA officer, Philip Giraldi, opined in *The American Conservative* that he found Hersh's story credible.^[43]

Syrian Civil War

During the Syrian Civil War US President Obama argued in a 2012 speech that a chemical attack in Syria would constitute crossing a "red line" and that this would trigger a US military intervention against the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.^[44] After this speech, and prior to the chemical attacks in Ghouta, chemical weapons were suspected to have been used in at least four attacks in the country.^[45] On 23 March 2013, the Syrian government requested the UN to send

inspectors in order to investigate an incident in the town of Khan al-Assal, where it said opposition forces had used chlorine-filled rockets.^[46] However, on 25 April US Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel stated that US intelligence showed the Assad government was likely to have used chemical weapons – specifically sarin gas.^[47]

On 8 December 2013, the *London Review of Books* published "Whose Sarin?", in which Hersh argued that President Obama had "omitted important intelligence, and in others he presented assumptions as facts" in his assertion during his televised speech of 10 September that the Syrian government had been responsible for the use of sarin gas in the Ghouta chemical attack of 21 August 2013 against a rebel-held district of Damascus.^[48] In particular, Hersh wrote of anonymous intelligence sources telling him that the Syrian army was not the only agency with access to sarin, referring to the Al-Nusra Front Jihadist group, and that, during the period before the Ghouta attack, secretly implanted sensors at the country's known bases had not detected suspicious movements suggesting a forthcoming chemical attack in the period.^[48]

On 22 December 2015, the *London Review of Books* published Hersh's article "Military to Military"^[49] in which he exposed the divide between the US top brass and the politicians in the White House when it came to dealing with Islamic extremists in Syria and Iraq. Hersh reported that the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) of the United States Department of Defense has indirectly supported Syria's President Bashar al-Assad with quality intelligence in an effort to help him defeat jihadist groups, providing said intelligence via Germany, Israel and Russia - to help Assad push back Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State. Hersh also writes the military even undermined a US effort to arm Syrian rebels in a bid to prove it was serious about helping Assad fight their common enemies. Hersh says the Joint Chiefs' maneuvering was rooted in several concerns, including the US arming of unvetted Syrian rebels with jihadist ties, a belief the administration was overly focused on confronting Assad's ally Russia, and anger the White House was unwilling to challenge Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey over their support of extremist groups in Syria.

On 25 June 2017, *Welt am Sonntag* published Hersh's article "Trump's Red Line"^[50] in which he claimed to expose the divide between the U.S. intelligence community and president Donald Trump over the alleged 'sarin attack' at the rebel-held town of Khan Shaykhun in Idlib on 4 April 2017: "Trump issued the order despite having been warned by the U.S. intelligence community that it had found no evidence that the Syrians had used a chemical weapon."^[50]^[51] Bellingcat accused Hersh of sloppy journalism: "Hersh based his case on a tiny number of anonymous sources, presented no other evidence to support his case, and ignored or dismissed evidence that countered the alternative narrative he was trying to build."^[52] The *London Review of Books* declined to publish Hersh's investigation.^[53]

In his article,^[50] Hersh states that the CIA was told directly by the Russians and Syrians of the place and time of the Syrian bombing ahead of time. He asserts that the Russians knew that the CIA was working with the opposition jihadists, and did not want any Americans killed. According to Hersh, the Syrian Air Force officers gave exact flight details in advance to the American deconfliction monitors aboard their AWACS plane, so that the Syrian jets could be tracked precisely, and the U.S. military did a Bomb Damage Assessment (BDA) report on the attack, showing the Syrian Air Force dropped a 500-lb conventional-explosives bomb that wiped out the entire building the jihadis were meeting in.^[50] Journalist George Monbiot asked Hersh to identify this building but he was unable to.^[54]

Criticism

Kennedy research

Hersh's 1997 book about John F. Kennedy, *The Dark Side of Camelot*, made a number of controversial assertions about the former president, including that he had had a "first marriage" to a woman named Durie Malcolm that was never terminated, that he had been a semi-regular narcotics user, and that he had a close working relationship with mob boss Sam Giancana which supposedly included vote fraud in one or two crucial states in the 1960 presidential election. For many of these allegations, Hersh relied only on hearsay collected decades after the event. In a *Los Angeles Times* review, Edward Jay Epstein cast doubt on these and other assertions, writing, "this book turns out to be, alas, more about the deficiencies of investigative journalism than about the deficiencies of John F. Kennedy."^[55] Responding to the book, historian and former Kennedy aide Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. called Hersh "the most gullible investigative reporter I've ever encountered."^[56]

A month before the publication of *The Dark Side of Camelot*, newspapers, including *USA Today*, reported Hersh's announcement that he had removed from the galleys, at the last minute, a segment about legal documents allegedly containing JFK's signature.^[57] The documents signed by "John F. Kennedy" included a provision, in 1960, for a trust fund to be set up for the institutionalized mother of Marilyn Monroe.^{[58][59]} A paralegal named Lawrence Cusack had shared them with Hersh and encouraged the author to discuss them in the book.^[58]

Shortly before Hersh's publicized announcement that he had removed from his book all references to Cusack's documents, federal investigators began probing Cusack's sale of the documents at auction.^[58] After *The Dark Side of Camelot* became a bestseller, Cusack was convicted by a federal jury in Manhattan of forging the documents and sentenced to a long prison term.^[60] In 1997 the Kennedy family denied Cusack's claim that his late father had been an attorney who had represented JFK in 1960.^[58]

Use of anonymous sources

There has been sustained criticism of Hersh's use of anonymous sources.^{[55][61][62]} Critics, including Edward Jay Epstein and Amir Taheri, say he is over-reliant on them.^{[55][61][62]} Taheri, for example, when reviewing Hersh's *Chain of Command* (2004), complained:

As soon as he has made an assertion he cites a 'source' to back it. In *every case* this is either an un-named former official or an unidentified secret document passed to Hersh in unknown circumstances. [...] By my count Hersh has anonymous 'sources' inside 30 foreign governments and virtually every department of the U.S. government.^[61]

In response to an article in *The New Yorker* in which Hersh alleged that the U.S. government was planning a strike on Iran, U.S. Defense Department spokesman Bryan G. Whitman said, "This reporter has a solid and well-earned reputation for making dramatic assertions based on thinly sourced, unverifiable anonymous sources."^[63]

David Remnick, the editor of *The New Yorker*, maintains that he is aware of the identity of all of Hersh's unnamed sources, telling the *Columbia Journalism Review* that "I know every single source that is in his pieces. ... Every 'retired intelligence officer,' every general with reason to know, and all those phrases that one has to use, alas, by necessity, I say, 'Who is it? What's his interest?' We talk it through."^[64]

Speeches

In an interview with *New York* magazine, Hersh made a distinction between the standards of strict factual accuracy for his print reporting and the leeway he allows himself in speeches, in which he may talk informally about stories still being worked on or blur information to protect his sources. "Sometimes I change events, dates, and places in a certain way to protect people. ... I can't fudge what I write. But I can certainly fudge what I say."^[62]

Some of Hersh's speeches concerning the Iraq War have described violent incidents involving U.S. troops in Iraq. In July 2004, during the height of the Abu Ghraib scandal, he alleged that American troops sexually assaulted young boys:

Basically what happened is that those women who were arrested with young boys, children, in cases that have been recorded, the boys were sodomized, with the cameras rolling, and the worst above all of them is the soundtrack of the boys shrieking. That your government has. They're in total terror it's going to come out.^[62]

In a subsequent interview with *New York* magazine, Hersh regretted that "I actually didn't quite say what I wanted to say correctly. ... It wasn't that inaccurate, but it was misstated. The next thing I know, it was all over the blogs. And I just realized then, the power of—and so you have to try and be more careful."^[62] In *Chain of Command*, he wrote that one of the witness statements he had read described the rape of a boy by a foreign contract interpreter at Abu Ghraib, during which a woman took pictures.^[62]

Link between the US government and Fatah al-Islam

In March 2007, Hersh asserted in a *New Yorker* piece that the United States and Saudi governments were funding the terrorist organization Fatah al-Islam through aid to Lebanese Sunni Prime Minister Fouad Siniora.^[65] Following the publication of the story, journalist Emmanuel Sivan in Beirut wrote that Hersh put forth the allegation without any reliable sources.^{[66][67]}

Morarji Desai libel suit

Hersh wrote in his 1983 book *The Price of Power* that former Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai had been paid \$20,000 a year by the CIA during the Johnson and Nixon administrations. Desai called the allegation "a scandalous and malicious lie" and filed a \$50 million libel suit against Hersh. By the time the case went to trial Desai, by then 93, was too ill to attend. CIA director Richard Helms and Henry Kissinger testified under oath that at no time did Desai act in any capacity for the CIA, paid or otherwise. A Chicago jury ruled in favor of Hersh, saying Desai did not provide sufficient evidence that Hersh had published the information with intent to do harm or with reckless disregard for the truth, either of which must be proven in a libel suit.^{[68][69]}

Seth Rich

On August 1, 2017, Hersh was interviewed by [National Public Radio](#) for a story on a lawsuit related to an investigation into the 2016 death of former [Democratic National Committee](#) staffer [Seth Rich](#). In the interview, Hersh denied a claim by investigator Ed Butowsky that Hersh had said he'd spoken to a Federal Bureau of Investigation source who confirmed the existence of information on Rich's laptop computer showing he had been in contact with [WikiLeaks](#) prior to his death. In the NPR interview, Hersh dismissed the claim as "gossip".^[70]

Awards, honors and associations

His journalism and publishing awards include the 1970 Pulitzer Prize, the 2004 [National Council of Teachers of English George Orwell Award](#) for Distinguished Contribution to Honesty and Clarity in Public Language, two National Magazine Awards, 5 George Polk Awards - making him that award's most honored laureate - and more than a dozen other prizes for investigative reporting:

- 1969: George Polk Special Award (for his My Lai reporting)
- 1970: Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting
- 1973: [George Polk Award](#) for Investigative Reporting; Scripps-Howard Public Service Award; Sidney Hillman Award
- 1974: George Polk Award for National Reporting
- 1981: George Polk Award for National Reporting
- 1983: [National Book Critics Circle Award](#) and [Los Angeles Times Book Prize](#) for *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House*
- 2003: [National Magazine Award](#) for Public Interest for his articles "Lunch with the Chairman", "Selective Intelligence", and "The Stovepipe"
- 2004: following Hersh's 2004 articles in the *New Yorker* magazine exposing the Abu Ghraib scandal: National Magazine Award for Public Interest, Overseas Press Club Award, National Press Foundation's Kiplinger Distinguished Contributions to Journalism Award, and his fifth George Polk Award
- 2017: [Sam Adams Award](#) for Integrity^[71]

Publications

Books

- *Chemical and Biological Warfare: America's Hidden Arsenal*. New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill; London: MacGibbon & Kee. 1968. [ISBN 0-586-03295-9](#).
- *My Lai 4: A Report on the Massacre and Its Aftermath*. Random House. 1970. [ISBN 0-394-43737-3](#).
- *Cover-Up: The Army's Secret Investigation of the Massacre at My Lai 4*. Random House. 1972. [ISBN 0-394-47460-0](#).
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- *Chain of Command: The Road from 9/11 to Abu Ghraib*. HarperCollins. 2004. [ISBN 0-060-19591-6](#).
- *The Killing of Osama Bin Laden*. Verso. 2016. [ISBN 1-784-78436-2](#).

Articles and reportage

- Full list of published articles in the *New Yorker* (<http://www.newyorker.com/contributors/seymour-m-hersh>)
- Collected articles for *London Review of Books* (<http://www.lrb.co.uk/contributors/seymour-m-hersh>)
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